***The Purpose of the Church

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-131***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," number 21 in Colossians 1:15-20.

It is indeed a great honor to have been chosen by God to be part of the body of Christ, the church. The church is a distinctive and special assembly of saints related to Jesus Christ as the head is to the human body. As part of the body of Christ, every Christian has a specific function to perform in the church body. That is our divine mission in life. The more people in the local church congregation who are functioning on their mission in life, and exercising the particular spiritual ability that God has given them, the more effective is the work of that particular body of believers, and the greater is the residue of rewards for those individual believers someday in heaven. The call that we have as Christians of the church age is very distinct, and very personal, unlike, in the Jewish age, under the Mosaic Law. This is very personal. God says, "I'm speaking to you as an individual."

**A Holy and Living Sacrifice**

We have looked at that splendid presentation of that call in Romans 12:1-2, where the apostle says, "I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." Serving God our father begins with offering our physical bodies to Him as a holy and living sacrifice." Now that is a terrible, terrible demand of Almighty God upon us. That suddenly restricts all of your life. When He says, "You give me your body," what else do you have left with which to go through your life? Once He has your body, you will suddenly discover that you have a pattern of life that is totally different than when that body is viewed as belonging to you personally, for your choices and use.

It is a living sacrifice because it is offered while we're alive here on earth, not in heaven. It is a sacrifice because we do God's work before pursuing our own interests. We sacrifice our bodies to God's service because of His mercies, which He has, in providing eternal, irrevocable salvation; the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide our lives; and, the full knowledge of doctrine to give us the mind of God. Those are tremendous mercies, and for that, we say, "We owe Him everything."

It is a holy sacrifice because we use our bodies in conformity to the standards of the integrity of God's moral laws. That's very hard to do – to live today in conformity to the standards of God's moral law, to maintain personal integrity. We live in a society has downgraded and debased moral conduct to the point where the devil is quite pleased with the standards. And any Christian who takes his cues, because you're rubbing shoulders with all these pigs and dogs that constitute human society, from the highest echelons on down to the garbage collector, you're going to be very disoriented to what God's lifestyle is for a member of the royal family of God – a member of the church of the Living God.

We don't mess around with evil, no matter how appealing it is. We stumble, yes, but that's why we have confession. We don't stay in the pigsty. When we realize what we have done, like the Prodigal Son, we get out, and we seek to avoid it.

Now, if you are not taught the Word of God, you will not find this a dignified lifestyle. If you're not taught the Word of God, you'll not find Christ your ideal and role model. If you are in a religious context of playing on your emotions, you will go nowhere spiritually because you will be subjective all the time: how you feel; how you think; and, how you want to do things. And then you bind to self-esteem; self-worth; and, all those other self-oriented things that our society drives us to, and which preachers in the pulpit are constantly promoting, because they're ignorant men to the orientation of the Word of God. We don't mess around with evil. And the first step of not messing around is to know what the evil is.

Furthermore, we remain, as members of the church, conscious of the indwelling presence of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and we act accordingly as those who are living in their very sight. Christ's eyes are never off of us. The spirit of God is never unaware of where we are and what we're doing, not the least of which is what goes on up in our brain, in the mentality of the soul.

The sacrifice of our lives to God's service and His plan for us is well-pleasing to Him, and it is a rational act of worship. Do you get that? Your body in God's service is a rational act of worship. No Christian with an understanding of eternal states that are involved would be so irrational as to fail to turn himself over to God's service, first and foremost. No believer is able really to honor God with worship, whose body is not at God's disposal in God's service.

So, in a lot of church services at this very moment, all over this vast area about us, there a lot of individuals who are pretending to worship God, but are nothing more than an outrageous display of personal hypocrisy. They have spent their week living oriented to themselves and to what goes on in this earth. Their eyes have been on earthly things. Their eyes have been on self. Now they walk into a church service and say, "I'm here to worship God." You can't do that. Paul makes it very clear. First of all, you give your body, and then you discover that you have performed a spiritual service of worship. It's just that simple.

In the church age, we are called to pattern our outward lifestyle after the person of Jesus Christ, and to be inwardly-guided by a mind which has been renewed by doctrine from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint. Romans 12:1-2, therefore, says, "And do not be conformed to this world outwardly, but be transformed inwardly by the renewing of your mind through doctrine, that you may prove (you may demonstrate) what the will of God is: that which is good; that which is acceptable; and, that which is perfect." The result is a life which will be lived in the will of God. That's the best place to be. That will makes our days on earth alive, which is good, suitable to the purpose for which we were born; well-pleasing; and, perfect, in terms of spiritual maturity. That is our calling.

Now, can you ignore it? Of course, you can. The principle of grace dominates the church age. Yes, you can make some football star your hero instead of Jesus Christ. Yes, you can say, "I've worked to accumulate this money, and I want to buy these things, and I want do these things, and that's why I'm into this, and I want to be able to live my life that way." Yes, you can do that. You can say, "I don't want to be like Jesus Christ, Who doesn't have a place to lay His head; Who doesn't have a place in which to hide from out of the elements; and, Who must go day-by-day in dependence upon God. Yes, you may say, "I don't want to be restricted in my physical being (in my life) to the pattern of Jesus Christ. I would rather have as my ideal and my fan that I admire some long-haired, maggot-infected, head full of mush, dope-stinking rock musician. And don't think that plenty of kids don't do that. I want to dress like them. I want to act like them. I want to look like them. I want be like Madonna.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

Sure you can, as a Christian. You can go right down there and be what Paul calls "the natural man." You can get there, and you can rummage around with all the lowlife of our society. And don't forget that anybody who is not a believer is a lowlife. Anybody who is not trained in the Word of God is a lowlife. Anybody who is not functioning at the super-grace level, where doctrine controls and guides the life, and the Holy Spirit is in charge, because you're in temporal fellowship, is a lowlife – varying degrees, but lowlife. In God's name, why would you want to imitate that? Why would you want to live like that when you know what is coming once you're out of here, and you're standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

**Spiritual Gifts**

Every Christian at the point of salvation receives from the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Spirit's own personal choice, one or more spiritual gifts – abilities with which to serve God our father. Use your gift. I remind you once more to live each day for eternity, not for life on this earth. Some of you will be able to do that. Some of you will never be able to do that. You will simply never be able to do that. I don't know why, but some of you will never will be able to do that. Some Christians never can rise to living each day in terms of eternity. They can only live it in terms of the now. Human-viewpoint living is a treadmill going nowhere. It's just running off the clock of your allotted lifespan, and after you run the clock off, that's it. Using your time; your talents; and, your treasures, and the things of heaven, will earn enormous, exhilarating, eternal rewards in heaven. And I didn't say that. Jesus said it – repeatedly. He kept telling us to store our treasures in heaven. He kept telling us where your heart is, that's who your treasure is.

Now, where's your heart? That's the problem. If your heart is in something connected with this life, that's where your treasure is. That is what you will esteem. That's what you'll value. That's what you'll get up tomorrow morning, and you'll go out full force after it. The time to do with your spiritual gift and your divine call is now. Forget a better day. Use what you have, because you're going to leave it all behind anyhow.

The other day I was walking through the mall. A lady called out to me. I looked. Ah, there was someone I knew. She said, "I'm just sitting here, waiting for my daughter to get my prescription." And she told me what her problem was that she had just had to have some special medical treatment for. And I couldn't help thinking that there was a time when this woman was so vital and active in God's work. And now I could see that all she can do is sort of hang on, and hope to get the feeling better, and hope to get stabilized. She's not going to be in spiritual combat anymore. The time is over.

A young girl came (an older teen) who had grown up with us, and she had been in our school, and she had been in the orbit of Berean ministries. She's not a part of our congregation. She came by the Bible school to pick up some younger children, and I said, "How about coming on staff of summer camp? I'm three ladies short, and we've lost one in Japan." She looked at me, "Well," I said, "Think it over." The next day she was in the hallway. I said, "What did you decide?" She said, "Oh, I'm coming. I'm coming. She hadn't even thought about it. She hadn't even viewed herself that she could do this.

So often we sell ourselves short. God doesn't sell us short. This gal is going to be a great contribution. She's a terrific kid. And this is what we're talking about. We have them all around here in the Berean ministry, and have had it for over four decades – people on their own, working on our campus. I drive by and I see them shoveling up that debris from the duplex. The duplex debris is like the widow's cruise of oil. You throw a truckload away, and there's another one that has accumulated. Just check with Tom Herd and Robert Nicholas and these guys. They've been coming to me for spiritual consultation. They begin to have a problem. There they are, shoveling away.

One young man was in the service last week. I heard this line of thought: "My life for God – for eternity. He was convicted. It wasn't my purpose, but he was overwhelmed because he's been out there in the outer orbit. And boy, he shows up to Mr. Gitchel and says, "What can I do the next day?" And he was at it all day. Spurts are not it, but this is the long-term purpose. My body is my Father's.

I see these people cutting the lawn. I see these task force boys meeting with Mr. Gitchel after Vacation Bible school, doing all kinds of things on this campus. I see these creative Vacation Bible teachers finding new vitality every day. I see this camp staff intensely preparing to get kids to do what? To reach for the stars in their spiritual lives. We don't want anybody like Demas. We don't want any hypocrites. We don't want anybody who's just like the religious world of their peers. We want them to reach for the stars. We want them to be eagles who soar, and they follow their star with God. We don't want to be a bunch of geese who gaggle together. We want them to soar like the eagles, not with the world's gaggling crowd.

**The Purpose of the Church**

All of this is because we are the privileged group of all humanity, of being the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of the church is very distinctive. You need to understand what that is from Scripture. This has been one area that Satan has highly perverted. And churches don't know who they are, and what they're supposed to be doing. Make no mistake about that. Churches don't know who they are, in contrast to Israel, and in the distinction of this age, and what they're supposed to be doing.

One thing that the church is not, is to fulfill Israel's Old Testament promises of covenant blessings – those promises that God gave, first of all, to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant, and then he expanded it in the Palestinian; the Davidic; and, the New Covenant. These covenants have never been fulfilled. They were never fulfilled up to the birth of Jesus Christ, and they have never been fulfilled to this day. And do you know what the problem is? The covenants were unconditional. God only had one conditional covenant with Israel, and that was the Mosaic Covenant. That one said, "If you do this, then I'll do this for you. If you don't do that, then I'm not going to do this for you. And if you do this, I will do this for you. And it went back and forth. It was a quid pro quo. I love that expression. It makes you feel like you've been to college: "quid pro quo." You do this, and I'll do this for you.

However, concerning the rest of the covenants, God said, "Rest your soul. I'm going to do this for you. Now, you're going to be rebels, and you're going to turn against Me, and I'm going to put the blow torch on you, and you're going to get burned like you wouldn't believe, right down to your descendants. You're going to have grief. You're going to be the dog's tail of all humanity. And everybody's going to kick you around. But someday, I'm going to raise you up, and you'll be the leading nation of the world, and you're going to be running the whole world with Me from the city of Jerusalem. That's what the Abrahamic; Palestinian (which deals with the land); Davidic (which deals with the throne); and, the New Covenant (which deals with salvation), are all about. This is why Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You're a scholar of the Law, Nicodemus. You're a student of the Old Testament. And you ask Me what it is to be born again? It's very clear in Ezekiel. I'll explain. It's the New Covenant." But he didn't make the connection. These covenants do not apply to gentiles. They do not apply to Christians.

A lady one time told me that she had her children baptized as infants. Well they couldn't be baptized really, but she went through this little sprinkling ritual ceremony. And I said, "Why?" And she said, "So that they can enjoy the blessings of the covenant." What covenant? Well the covenant that God promised. To whom? Well to Israel. Well, where do you come in on that? But she was adamant that she should baptize her little infants so that they would have the blessings of the covenant.

Well, these were only to Israel as a nation. Every Jew had great national blessings he would enjoy, but he had to be born again. That's what they missed. They had to be born again by trusting in the Messiah Savior to come. And He did come.

So, the church is not to fulfill anything that God promised to Israel. There's nothing in the Bible that indicates that, that's totally imposed by spiritualizing the words instead of letting them mean what they say. What these covenants promised to Israel was that there would be a king ruling forever over Israel; that there would be an eternal possession of the land of Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates, and from the desert to the Mediterranean; and, that there would be a spiritual new birth and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Israel was be the leading nation of the world in the world government – a government of peace and prosperity like mankind has never known before. And the Jew would be the source of total knowledge about God. Everybody would turn to the Jews and say, "Tell us about God."

**The Purpose of Christ's Mission on Earth**

The Lord Jesus Christ, when He came at His first coming, came to fulfill these promises, and in the process, to provide the basis of salvation. That is why He came. He came to fulfill the covenant promises. In Luke 2:30-32, Simeon, the old man, sees the baby Jesus, brought in for circumcision at the proper time. And he recognizes that this is God's Savior: "For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou has prepared in the presence of all people – a light of revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." He recognized that this was the Messiah Savior. Jesus Christ came to provide salvation as a basis of fulfilling the covenants.

Now I don't know what would've happened had the Jews received Him. Had the Jews accepted Him as Messiah Savior, I do know what would've happened. The kingdom would've been set up. And please remember that the kingdom has to do with Israel. All these words about kingdom is Israel. We the church are not the kingdom of God. We are the church of God. To us, Christ is our Lord. To Israel, He is King of the Kingdom. That is totally different. Don't mix those two. People are sloppy with that terminology.

Now what would God have done? How would he have provided salvation? I don't know, but He would have. And there would have had to have been a payment of death, and the bearing of the sins of the world in some other way. But this is for which He came.

When they did reject Him, the Jewish-promised kingdom, which Christ had come to set up, was postponed, but it was never abrogated. The Old Testament was very clear that these covenants are unconditional. At that point, Jesus Christ turned to a new mission, and He first enunciated that in Matthew 16:18. The Old Testament never spoke about this. Jesus never said a word to the disciples for all the three-and-a-half years of their ministry together. He had been working to bring in the kingdom. Now in Matthew 16:13, please notice: "Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi." Caesarea Philippi is gentile territory. It's very interesting that he walks out of Israel, and crosses the border into gentile territory because He's about to make an announcement to them that completely puzzles them. They look around at one another: "What's He talking about?" And these men were well-versed in the Old Testament Scripture, as Jewish boys were. And He raises the question, "Who do people say that the Son of God is? And the disciples give him various people that are mentioned.

And then Jesus says, "But who do you say I am?" And Peter, as spokesman, says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." You're the Messiah, and You are God's Son, and You are God, and You have come for the kingdom mission and purpose. Matthew 16:17: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you Simon Bar Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven. You've just had a revelation, Simon, from God – a great insight. There are many people who look at Me, and they do not believe that I am the Messiah Savior. They do not believe I am the Son of God. They do not believe I am deity. But you do, and the reason you do is because God has made it clear to you."

Now all of you have experienced the same thing. The reason you believe the gospel, and trusted yourself to Christ is because God made it clear to you. And if He did not make it clear to you, you'd have nothing to do with Him.

Then comes verse 18. "And I also say to you, here on gentile territory, that you are Peter" ("Petros" in the Greek). It means "a little stone" – a pebble: "And upon this rock" ('petra', a different Greek word – this is the word used for 'bedrock,' a huge boulder). Jesus is playing on these two words: a little pebble; and, a bedrock foundation: "I will build My church. And I also say to you, you are Peter, and upon this bedrock." What is the bedrock? The bedrock is Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." You must connect the context together. Otherwise you'll fall into the trap that the Roman Catholics have fallen into, saying that the church is built on Peter. No, it is built on Christ, and it is built upon this testimony of Peter's, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Then Jesus uses these critical five words: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." They must have looked at one another very puzzled (these disciples): "What is He talking about? We never heard about "ekklesia." What is "ekklesia?" What is the church? And these five words tell us a great deal. Verse number one: "I." Jesus Christ does the building. "Will." This is future tense. It hasn't happened in the past. It hasn't happened as they were speaking. It was still before them. It wasn't going to start until the day of Pentecost: "Build." One block upon another. As one believer is, as Peter says, added to this structure as living stones, to build this structure: "My." It belongs to Jesus Christ: "My assembly," or "My church," or "My special called-out group of people who will be to Me as a bride is to a bride groom, and who will be to Me as the body is to the head, which is our Colossian analogy: "Who be to Me as the vine is to the branches."

This was a tremendous revelation, and the disciples didn't know what to make of it, up or down, because it was a whole new territory of instruction, because now Jesus had said that there was going to be a royal family: "It's not going to be David's royal family. It's going to be My royal family. It's going to be believers of the new age of the church. It's going to be the age of grace operation – no longer the Mosaic Law operation. We're going to be a whole new breed. We're going to be a new species of human beings. And on this gentile territory, from Jew and Gentile, I tell you that this body will be built." And the full information was then gradually given to them, mostly to the apostle Paul in those three years that he spent in Christ's personal class in the Arabian Desert.

So, Jesus came to fulfill the promises. They rejected Him. Then He made a statement: "I'm turning away from My mission. I'm not going to pursue what I came to do this first time. I'm going to have to come back a second time. Then I will fulfill the mission of the kingdom. Now, we're going to shift gears, gentlemen, into a new age, where we're going to build the church." This was never revealed in the Old Testament. God's purpose today then is not fulfilling the covenant promises to Israel. It is not the age of building the kingdom of the Jews. It is the era of building the church, the body of Christ.

Israel's kingdom was postponed because the Jews rejected Him as their King (Acts 1) – postponed, not abrogated. In Acts 1:6-7, when they had come, Jesus was about to ascend to heaven. They're out there together on the mount, waiting to see what has happened. Acts 1:6, "And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, 'Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'" These men knew exactly what they were talking about – the kingdom. They knew what the prophets had revealed about Israel being a kingdom that's going to rule this earth. They knew exactly what the Jewish kingdom was all about. They were confused now.

They said, "Jesus, you've been rejected. They crucified you. Now the basis of salvation has been provided. There is a ground for God's justice to be satisfied. Now, with that base, are we going to bring in the Jewish kingdom?" This is not talking about the church. And He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the epochs which the Father has fixed by His Own authority. The specific date or the vast epochs of time – that is something that should not occupy you. You do not worry about when we're going to bring in the kingdom. It's down the line several centuries now. But you don't have to worry about that. What you are to be preoccupied with is the new era of the church.

Acts 1:5 says, "For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Here, Jesus, interestingly enough, is tying together what the Old Testament prophets tied together. There would be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the arrival of the kingdom. Jesus says there is going to be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit not many days hence – ten days, as a matter of fact, and you're going to be hit with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Nobody has ever experienced that before. And with that baptism, you'll be sealed to one another, and the body of Christ will begin.

What Jesus was referring to was, for example, Isaiah 32:15-20: "Until the spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is considered as a forest." He's speaking about the time of Israel's kingdom being in force. And you notice that the spirit is poured out: "Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness will abide in the fertile fields, and the work of righteousness will be peace in the service of righteousness, quietness, and confidence forever". He's talking about the millennium: "And then my people will live in a peaceful habitation, and in secure dwellings, and in undisturbed resting places." The Jew has never known that. That's future: "And will hail when the forest comes down, and the city will be utterly laid low. How blessed will you be? You who sow beside all waters, who let out freely the ox and the donkey? How good that life is going to be, is what you are saying? And notice when that good life of the millennium comes, there's going to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a foundation. Ezekiel does the same thing.

Let's look at Joel 2:28-31. That covers this same idea: "And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind. And your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants, I'll pour out My Spirit in those days. (What days?) And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth – blood, fire and columns of smoke. And the sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes."

Pentecost was not the fulfillment of this Scripture, as the charismatic claim, because it's going to be with the events of the tribulation: the blood; the fire; the columns of smoke; the sun turned into darkness; and, the moon turned into blood. It is going to be when judgment is upon this earth, that then will come the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Well, what Jesus did back in Acts was saying: "If you want to talk about the kingdom, one of the key features of the kingdom is going to be the working of the spirit of God. And that feature is now going to be in effect in this new age of the church because it's all going to be about the leading of the Holy Spirit. If Satan cannot get you to reject the gospel; to reject Christ as your personal Savior; and, to blow off salvation, and you believe (and become a believer), and I'll tell you exactly where the devil's going to zero in on your mind for false doctrine. It'll be the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Just like about you. Some churches – you might not say they have a false doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but they ignore Him. People go to those churches, and they don't even hear about the Holy Spirit. They never think about the Holy Spirit. It's just a kind of a little side thing.

Whereas in the Christian life, unless you are in temporal fellowship, which means that God the Holy Spirit is in charge, and you have no known sin unconfessed, you cannot live the Christian life. You cannot live above the animal level. That's it. When you're out of temporal fellowship, you're an animal, and that's how you will live. So, what does the devil do? He gets the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit botched up, and sends people off chasing miraculous gifts that no longer exist because their purpose has been served. He gets people running off, chasing the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which, if they're believers, they've already received. And in this way, he incapacitates the Christian. However, it is interesting that, in Acts, Jesus said, "Yes, the Holy Spirit is going to play a prominent role, but it's going to be different than that which is in the future with Israel's kingdom. The one thing that Jesus made very clear is that there is going to come on the face of the earth a kingdom. Augustine said, "No, material things are all sinful. Sin is inherent in material things. So, Jesus Christ would never reign upon a kingdom on this earth. And that's why Augustine, the father of the Roman Catholic Church, and the inventor amillennialism said, "There cannot be a millennium on earth – only one in heaven. However: Matthew 19:28: "Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you that you who have followed Me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel." Jesus is talking about in His kingdom, in the Millennium, the apostles will be reigning with Him, over Israel.

Let's read an extended section here. Luke 19:11-27: "And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately." The apostles knew why He had come. He had not come to set up a church. They didn't even know what that was. He had come to set up a kingdom – the kingdom promised in the Old Testament.

"He said, therefore, 'A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then returned. And he called 10 of his slaves, and gave them 10 minas, and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.''" He gave them a sum of money. But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' And it came about that when he returned after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done."

"The first appeared saying, 'Master, your minas have made 10 more." And he said to him, "Well done, good slave. Because you've been faithful in very little things, be an authority over 10 cities.'" He's talking about His Millennial Kingdom.

"The second came saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'

"Another came saying, 'Master, behold your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you because you are an exacting man. You take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.'" The products of business is what he's talking about. "He said to him, 'By your own words, I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not? Then why did you not put the money in the bank, and having come, I would've collected it with interest.' And he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him, and give it to the one who has 10 minas.' And they said to him, 'Master, he has 10 already.' 'I tell you that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. But these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.'"

Now what he is talking about here is the kingdom that he's bringing upon this earth, and that the faithfulness of the servants will be treated according to their performance. This is clearly an earthly kingdom.

One more, in Luke 22:28-30: "And you are those who have stood by me in my trials. And just as My Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you'll sit on thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel." Now, you don't sit and drink and have banquets in heaven. This is an earthly scene. Jesus very clearly said, "I have a kingdom. I'm going to come. I'm going to set it up. And when I do, you have followed me so faithfully, and you have stood by me, that when I gave you a job, you went out and did it. When I gave entrusted something to you, you were good stewards." And did you notice who gets the more? Not the guy who doesn't give to God. The guy who returns to God is the one who gets more. And the one who gives less to God, he gets less. And the one who gives nothing to God, he gets zilch. Do you want to know how to increase your income? Start giving it away to God. That's living for eternity.

Kingdom promises to Israel from God are yet to be fulfilled, and these will be fulfilled apart from the church, and apart from the body of Christ. That is the point that we're trying to make. Yes, there is a kingdom on this earth. It has to do with Israel. Yes, there are covenants. They have to do with Israel. And God is going to fulfill every one of them, but the church has nothing to do with that.

Romans 9, you may remember, tells about Israel's past. Romans 10 describes Israel's present condition in the world. When you get to Romans 11:25-27, it's describing Israel's future. Notice: "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullest of the gentiles has come in." What does that mean? It means that Israel, as a whole, has a hard heart toward the Messiah. They won't accept Him. But he says "partial hardening," because here and there, a Jew says, "You're right. Jesus is the Messiah." And a Jew is saved by trusting in Him, and then he stops being a Jew, like you stopped being a gentile when you were born again, and entered the body of Christ.

Romans 11:26: "And thus all Israel will be saved. As it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove unrighteousness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins." The promise is that He is going to return, and that He is going to fulfill the covenants, and all Israel (as a nation) will now be preserved. That's what it means by "saved" here.

So, there's a great future for the Jewish people, but it's on hold. The only future that they have now is to trust in Christ and become part of the body of Christ. God's program today, then, is the out-calling of the church from among Jews and Gentiles to form the body and the bride of Christ. Ephesians 2:18: "For through Him, we both (Jews and Gentiles) have our access in one Spirit to the Father." That was a hard doctrine. The Jew knew that he was favored by God, but not the gentiles. Now, a gentile? This is why, seven years after Pentecost, God finally took Peter and said, "Go down to Joppa. We're going to start bringing gentiles into the body of Christ." They probably said, "Oh, you can't be serious. They're unclean." God said, "Peter, don't tell me what's clean and what's unclean. Go down there to the house of Cornelius, and I'll show you what we're going to do." Well, you know the story. As he is explaining how to go to heaven through trust in the Savior Jesus Christ, these godly people, who only knew Judaism, believe in the Savior, and suddenly, they begin speaking in the foreign languages of the day. Peter recognizes that these are foreign languages. And he said, "Then it's true." That's all the language was for – to confirm that Christianity was real, and that it was from God. When he went back to Jerusalem, he said, "I couldn't deny it any longer, brethren. They were doing the same thing then (seven years later) as what we did on Pentecost, in speaking in languages that we didn't know. And I knew that this was of God." So, he said, "I knew then that Gentiles were part of this." That's what God is doing – a special people from among Jews and Gentiles.

Romans 10:12-13: Chapter 10 is the Jews' present condition: "For there is no distinction between Jew and gentile. For the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him. For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." And if you do not call by believing that Christ has paid for your sins, then you will not be saved, whether you're a Jew or a gentile. That is the status of the Jew today. The church is God's new work which is being done.

Now, this church has a key condition that's very different from Israel of old (from the Judaistic system). And that is grace. That is what churches don't understand. Grace does not prevail in churches. There are certain things that are the result of grace, not the least of which is minding your own business, and not poking into the business and the life of other believers. There are all kinds of things that have to do with grace. Tonight, we'll walk you through it. We'll walk you through grace, and we will walk you through God's new testament of dealing under grace in all kinds of relationships of life. You may learn something. This relationship of life, if you operate on grace, then you'll do this. If you don't, you will do this. And here's the Christian who now lives under freedom – maximum, maximum freedom. That's why I told you earlier" If you want to ignore this, go to it. That's what grace means. You can do whatever you want. You can blow yourself up spiritually. Or you can say, "I'll go with God. In the long run, what do I care about these things? In the long run, what I care about is Christ, and the glory that I'm going to share with Him."

People who understand that, and people who have taken hold of that, those are the ones who are making all of this tremendous outreach of Berean Church, in one way or another, possible: with their spiritual gifts; with their time; with their talents; and, with their treasures. Please join us this evening.

Our Father, we do thank You for the fact that we are different in Your high program. We are different. We are distinct. We are special. We are Christians. We are the church. And we pray Your blessing upon us as we walk out of here, that we will walk with a little more dignity. Christ is our example. His integrity is our pattern. We pray that You will help us to recognize that this marvelous person, the God-Man Jesus Christ, has taken us to His bosom as a husband takes his bride.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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